

How to reset the tension on an 8-track tape

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The way to reset tension on a tape is:

1. Open the cart
2. With a razor, cut the tape about one inch from where it comes out of the center of the spool.
3. Take hold of that little 1 inch segment that is sticking out from the center of the spool and VERY GENTLY tug on it until you have unwound 4 - 6 times (depending on how bad the tension problem is).
4. Unkink the section of tape you have pulled out from the center of the spool and resplice. Then pull gently so that the slack is taken back up on the reel.
5. Now, remove the whole spool and tape and also the roller and fix the underlying problem: lube the posts for the roller and spool. Not too much. In a pinch you can use side of nose oil but there are better substances. Vaseline can work if you don't use much. Also, before applying the lube, use a clean q-tip to remove the particles of fine dust from the posts first, otherwise dust (or sand!!!) when combined with lube and some friction can be the most efficient substance for grinding known to man.
6. You can tell if you put too much lube on a roller hub: when you put the roller back on take it back off and if you can see any lube on the side of the roller wipe it all off with a clean q-tip.
7. Put everything back together. It can take up to 5 plays for the tension to restabilize at a proper equilibrium, so don't be surprised if you hear a little whir or slippage in the first 5 plays after resetting the tension. If it continues beyond that, you may need to open her back up and have a look.

SPECIAL CASE:

1. Tension problem leading to a gap in the concentric rings of spool but the whole tape on the spool is still symmetrical: after doing 3 above, take the end of tape that goes to the take up outer end of the reel and pull gently until the gap disappears and the tape tightens at the center of the spool. Then, unwind from the center of the spool 5 times to set the tension properly and continue as above.
2. Tension problem leading to a gap in the concentric rings of spool but the whole tape on the spool is lopsided. Try to determine if the lopsidedness is caused by a section of tape (often at or close to the foil splice, and most often it's the foil has come off or partially off and half the foil has folded back on itself). If not, then you can fix as for special case #1 above. But if there is a fold or a foil problem, then doing the above will, if anything make the problem worse. Your best bet in this situation is to cut near the center of the spool and then with the loose bit from the end of the take up outer edge, unwind all the tape all the way to where the fold or foil problem is and fix that, then wind it all back onto the reel and then reset the tension and splice as above. You cannot expect a lopsided tension problem to get better on its own.

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